

ARIZONA  
TELEMEDICINE  
PROGRAM



# Disparities in Telehealth Accessibility & Efforts to Overcome the Digital Divide

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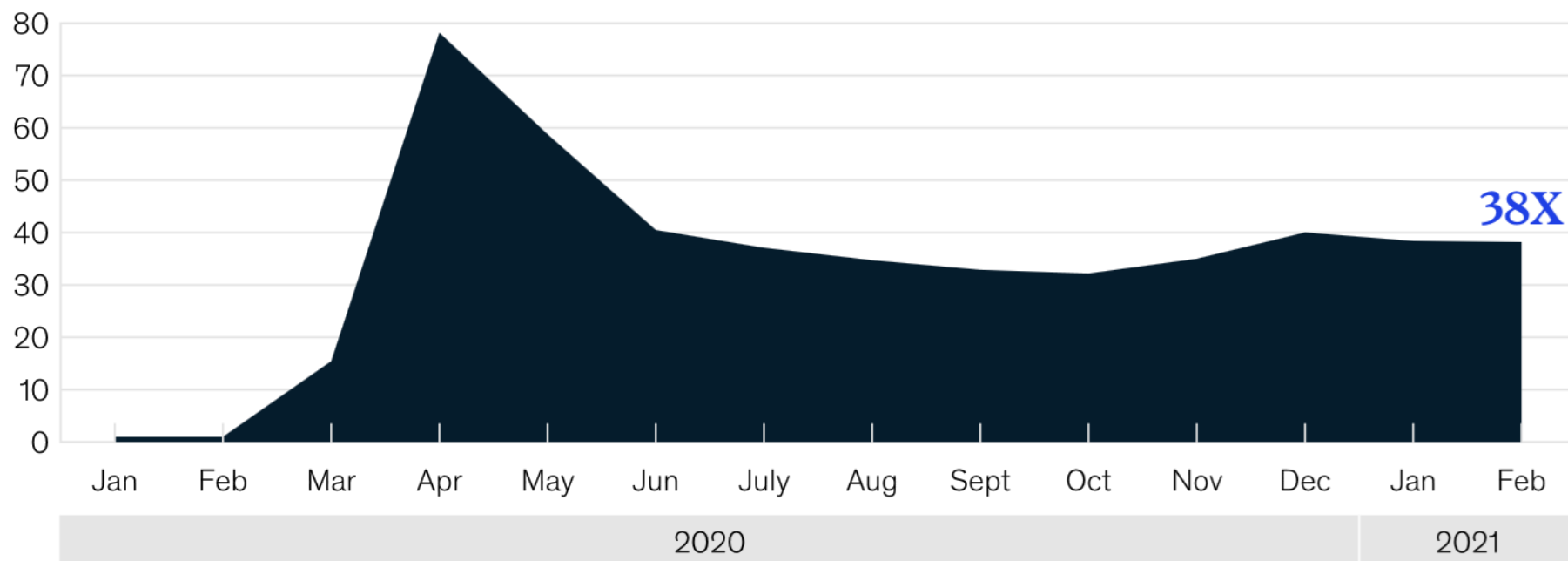
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# Growth in telehealth usage peaked during April 2020 but has since stabilized.

Telehealth claims volumes, compared to pre-Covid-19 levels (February 2020 = 1)<sup>1</sup>



**It works!**

**Outcomes**

**Satisfaction**

**Efficiency**

**Cost**

<sup>1</sup> Includes cardiology, dental/oral, dermatology, endocrinology, ENT medicine, gastroenterology, general medicine, general surgery, gynecology, hematology, infectious diseases, neonatal, nephrology, neurological medicine, neurosurgery, oncology, ophthalmology, orthopedic surgery, poisoning/drug tox./comp. of TX, psychiatry, pulmonary medicine, rheumatology, substance use disorder treatment, urology. Also includes only evaluation and management visits; excludes emergency department, hospital inpatient, and psychiatry inpatient claims; excludes certain low-volume specialties.

Source: Compile database; McKinsey analysis

McKinsey  
& Company

# Technology Access

- At least 21 million in US lack broadband access
- Digital divide primarily affects underserved patients incl rural
- Device access - although 81% US population owns smartphone gaps exist across literacy & socioeconomic status & other devices
- Mobile-first populations rely solely on device for internet access largely from racial/ethnic minorities = opportunities for patients who also tend to have worse health outcome



# Digital Health Literacy

- Degree patient can obtain, process, understand digital services & information
- Apps, info, portals etc. widely available but lacking literacy = barrier to understanding complex security safeguards, privacy policies & proper/effective use
- Need adequate literacy & educational supports but often not in place



"You caught a virus from your computer and we had to erase your brain. I hope you've got a back-up copy!"

# Inclusive Designs

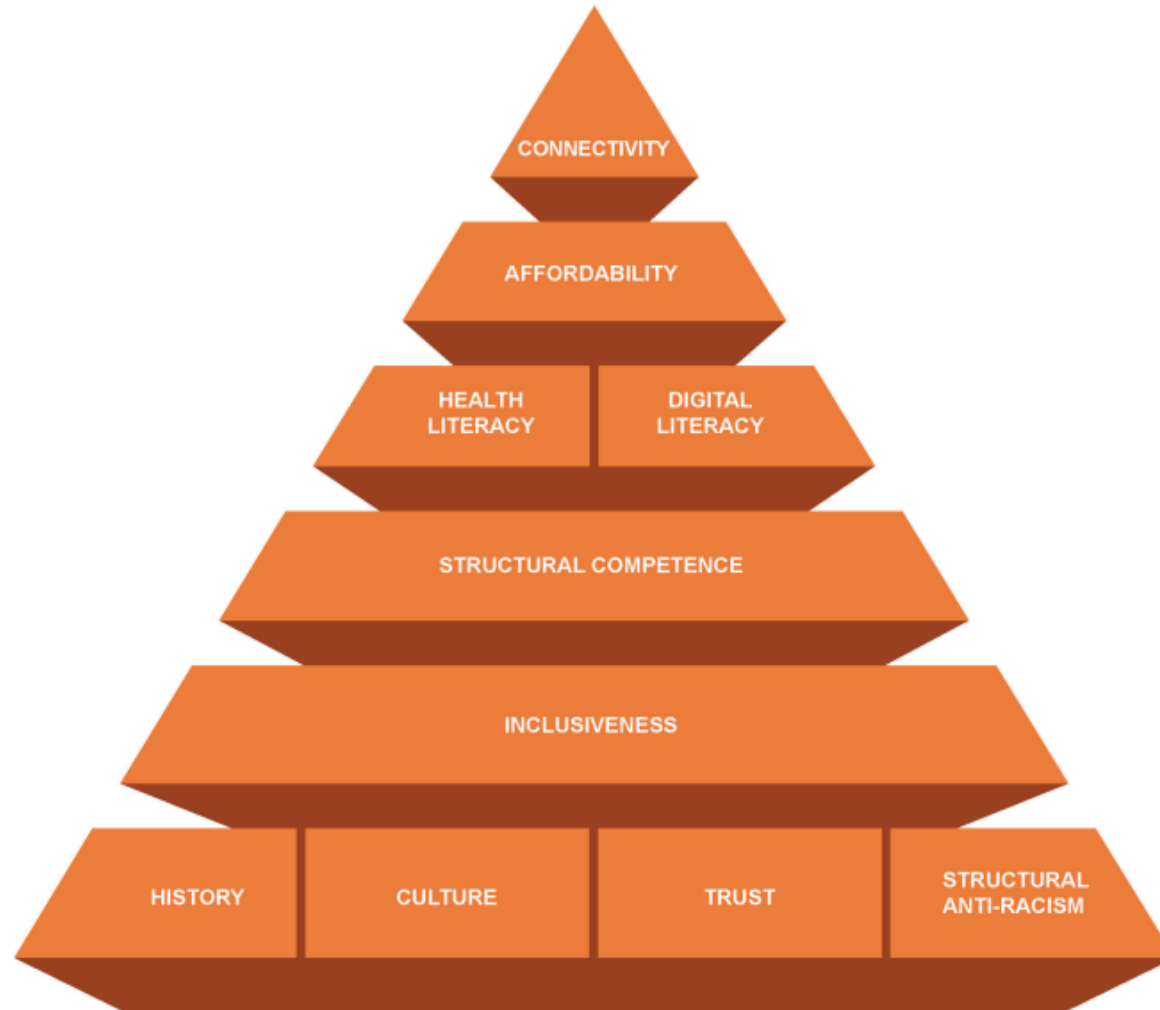
- Complex user interfaces & data entry burden
- User-centered designs driven by understanding & evaluation users, tasks, context, environment lacking
- Lack focus on culture, literacy, numeracy limit benefits increased data access & worsen inequities
- Language barriers exacerbate



# What Can We Do?

- **Govt:** Promote interoperability, enact policies favorable to digital health, further efforts like National CLAS Standards: Culturally & Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health & Health Care
- **Vendors:** develop linguistically & culturally tailored digital tools & engage researchers & patients in usability evaluations – one size doesn't fit all
- **Institutions:** Invest portals/apps address needs underserved, track digital use & demographics, educate patients, integrate TH into workflows
- **Clinical teams:** Offer & encourage digital options to all
- **Patients:** Advocate & get involved

**Exhibit 1:**  
**A Framework for Eliminating Health Disparities Using Telehealth**



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# Think Creatively!

- **Device loans** – lots of grants, foundations etc. support
- **Community** hot-spot options for awareness & access – libraries, community centers, spiritual partners, homeless shelters, volunteers, stare fairs, local events
- Involve **trainees** – great source energy, creativity & motivation
- Need to **think broader** than race, age, gender – disabilities, mobility, home situation (abuse) when thinking about TH use & adapting resources/tools to different populations
- Can't just ask do you have smartphone & broadband – **more nuanced** – how old is smartphone, how many others in house using broadband, type data plan (may prefer Netflix over TH visit!)
- Need to consider **patient-provider ecosystem** not just separate pieces

# Resources

- National Digital Equity Center <https://digitalequitycenter.org/>
- National CLAS Standards: Culturally & Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health & Health Care <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/clas>
- Rodriguez et al. Digital Health Equity as a Necessity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act Era. JAMA DOI: 10.1001/jama.2020.7858
- CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/features/reach-health-equity/index.html>
- ATA Framework for Eliminating Health Disparities Using Telehealth <https://www.americantelemed.org/resources/a-framework-for-eliminating-health-disparities-using-telehealth/>

# Thank you!

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